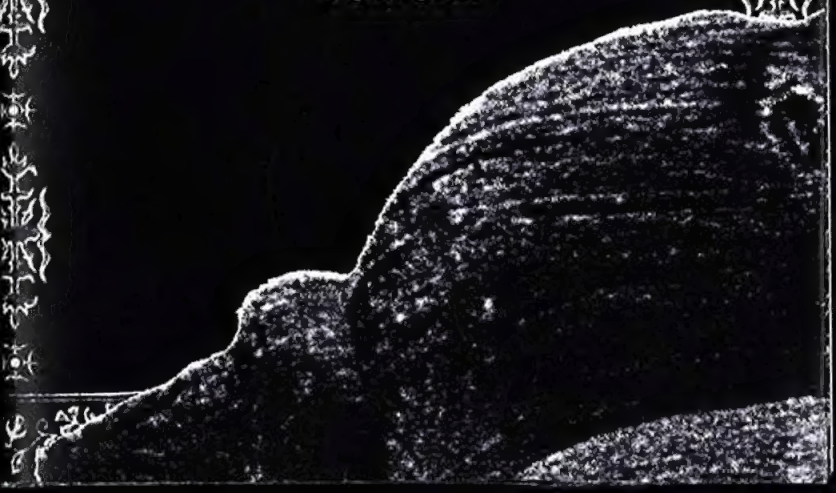
RELIGION, MYTH & FOLKLORE

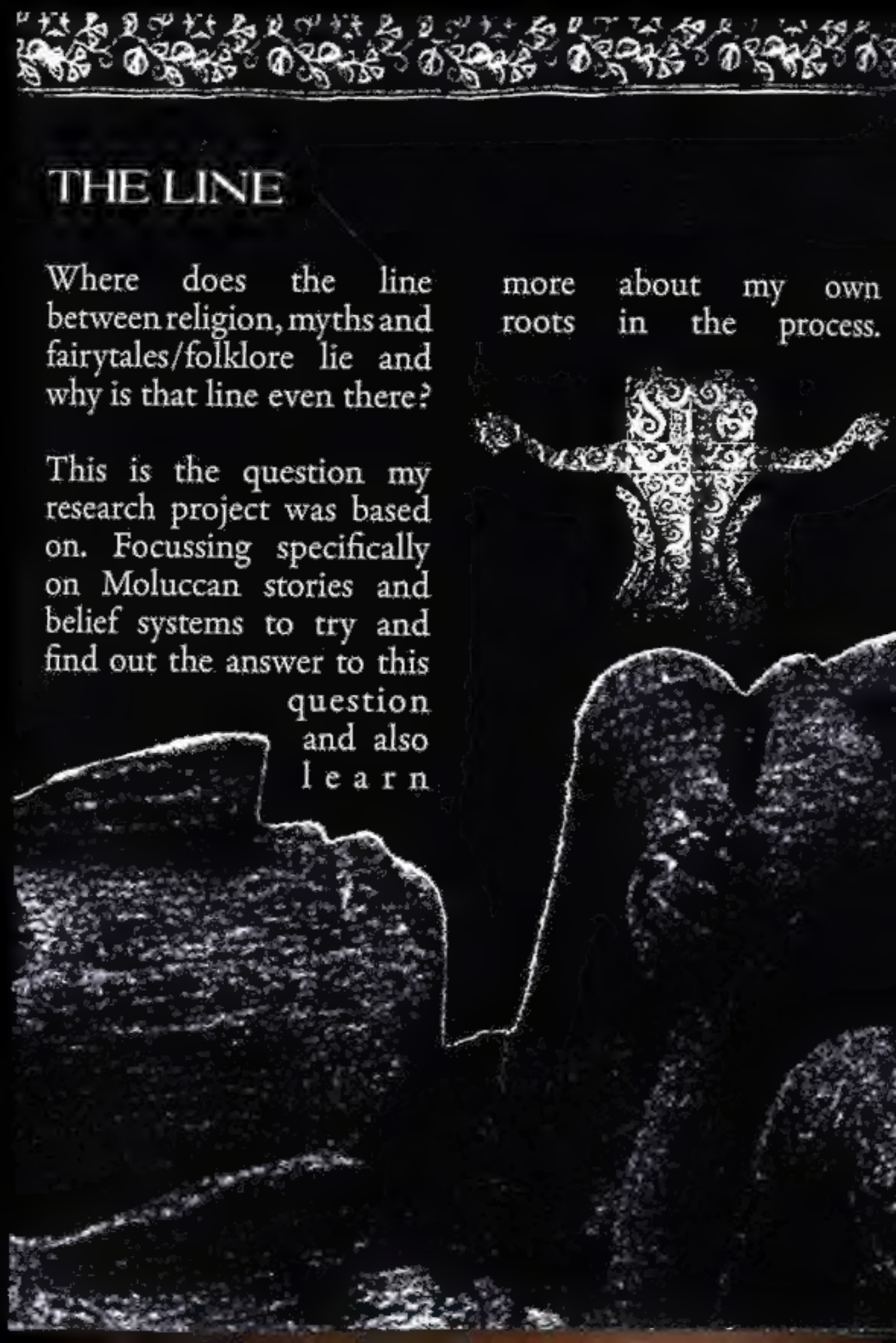
IN MOLUCCAN CULTURE



THE LINE

Where does the line between religion, myths and fairytales/folklore lie and why is that line even there?

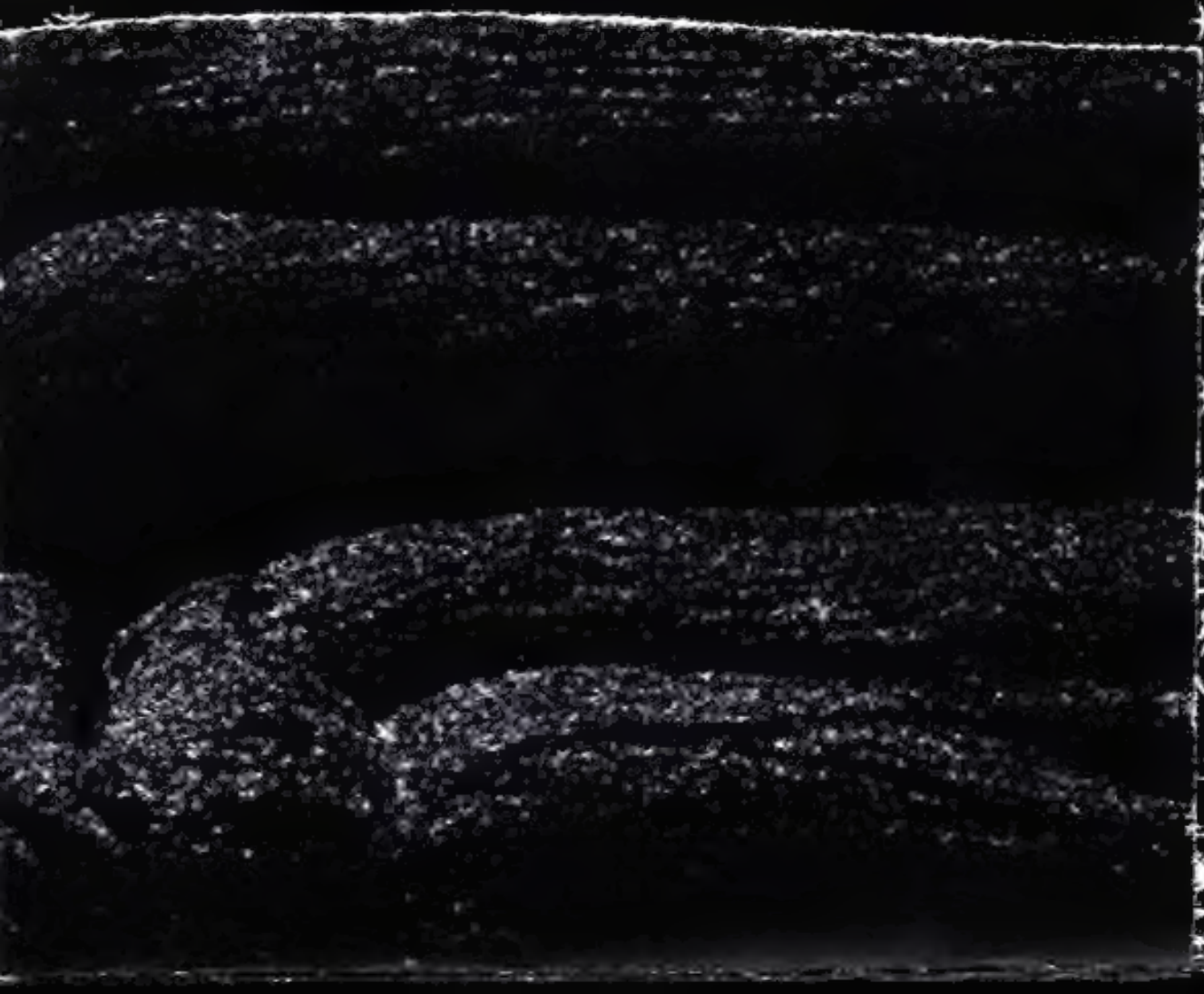
This is the question my research project was based on. Focussing specifically on Moluccan stories and belief systems to try and find out the answer to this question and also learn more about my own roots in the process.



Changing a group's belief systems is one of the most important and impactful strategies used when trying to conquer land and rule over a group of people.

Thus it is no surprise that this was one of the first plans set into action by European settlers as soon as they made it to distant lands.

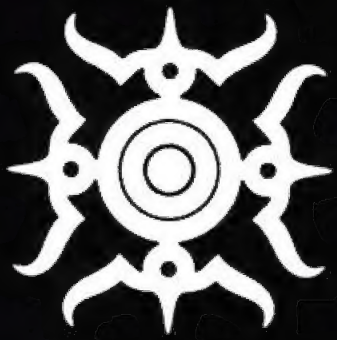
Your belief systems are no longer valid. Just fairy tales.



ALIFURU

Alifuru was a term created by the european colonizer, specifically the Dutch. This term refers to the people of the Maluku islands, but was used to group everyone together as

'non-islamic, non-christian'.



Before the arrival of Islam and Christianity, the indigenous people of the Maluku Islands followed animistic and ancestral belief systems. Meaning that they believed that nature was alive with spirits inhabiting mountains, rivers, trees, and animals. Ancestral spirits played a central role in daily life, guiding and protecting their descendants, and were honored through rituals and sacred objects passed down through generations. Believing that they were not only one with nature, but also dependent and inseparable. believing every organism has a spiritual connection to one another.

Later, the term 'alifuru' took on colonial, racialized, and exoticized connotations, often implying that the people were 'primitive' or 'uncivilized'. Together with enforcing christianity to be taught in schools and deaming anything that was 'non-christian' as 'primitive' this quickly brought the people on the islands to convert and serve under the god / attend the church their oppresser presents them with.

This process of making people believe that their belief systems are not correct has been done all over the world.

You might have heard of the word 'pagan'. A pagan religion, what does it mean?

The word 'pagan' began as a way for early christians in Rome to refer to any religion that wasn't christianity.

This word also quickly got used in a very negative context. Pagans were no longer people of other belief systems. Pagan religions now meant 'the religions of the peasants'.

This strategy of 'othering' has been used in almost every mass conquering known to man. If you make people believe their belief systems are not correct, and give them promises of eternal forgiveness, ofcourse they will go along with it.

And eventhough a lot of moluccan people have since tried to take back words like 'Alifuru' to empower themselves, The lasting damage it has done and the changes it has made still has massive implications to this day.

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